



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact: Lori Warden
lwarden@upwardpr.com, 406.360.2825

Join the Buzz campaign exceeds \$5 million fundraising goal to build Montana's first tropical butterfly house and premier education gardens

Missoula Butterfly House & Insectarium and Healthy Acres Healthy Communities Foundation celebrate private fundraising campaign for the Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center and Rocky Mountain Gardens

January 31, 2023, Missoula, Mont. — The Missoula Butterfly House & Insectarium and Healthy Acres Healthy Communities Foundation announce that they have exceeded their \$5 million capital campaign goal to create the state's first tropical butterfly house and premier education gardens. **With a total of \$5.3 million raised**, the Join the Buzz campaign celebrates the metamorphosis of its efforts and the generosity of the many donors who supported the campaign.

The Join the Buzz campaign has been a combined effort of the two Missoula-based nonprofits working alongside public partners, the Missoula County Weed District & Extension and the Missoula Conservation District. Currently under construction, the Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center and Rocky Mountain Gardens is set to open this year and will be the first major new structure in the Missoula County Fairgrounds revitalization.

"Much of this campaign occurred over Zoom during the pandemic, so its success speaks volumes about the generosity and forward-thinking vision of our community," said Doug Emlen, Ph.D., co-chair of the Join the Buzz campaign and a Regents professor of biology at the University of Montana. "With its maze of demonstration gardens and hands-on live insect exhibits, this will be the go-to destination for science education in the region and an instant landmark for Missoula."

Campaign co-chair John Rimel added, "It is wonderful to see the generous response of the Missoula community to this dream that brings together partners in science, conservation and experiential learning under one campus. We can't thank the community enough for their support!"

The nonprofit leadership teams and the Join the Buzz campaign steering committee members, including Marcy Allen, Bill Caras, Shawn Clouse, Doug Emlen, Larry Gianchetta, Philip and Bonny Ramsey, John Rimel, Dale Woolhiser, and honorary chairs Chris and Nora Hohenlohe and John and Sue Talbot, began quietly fundraising in 2019, announcing the public phase of the campaign in May 2021. Over the last

three years, the campaign has raised funds from regional philanthropists, foundations and individual donors from all backgrounds.

“It’s extremely gratifying to have been able to contribute to the campaign’s success,” said Kate Supplee, a longtime supporter of the Missoula Butterfly House and an early donor to the Join the Buzz campaign. “The unique programs and experiences the new facility will offer are very exciting!”

“All along we have felt the broad and overwhelming support from people who joined our dream and believed that this is an important project for our community and our region — many who have been by our side all along and several who joined the campaign as new donors,” said Jen Marangelo, executive director of the Missoula Butterfly House. “We are tremendously grateful to all our supporters and the campaign steering committee who volunteered their time for this tremendous effort.”

Marangelo first dreamt of a tropical butterfly house and insectarium for Missoula more than 16 years ago, inspiring others to join her dream including her co-founder, husband and development director Glenn Marangelo and the hundreds of Missoula Butterfly House supporters of all ages who joined them along the way. Likewise, Jerry Marks, longtime Missoula County Extension agent who the Missoula County Commissioners recently honored with the naming of the facility, had a similar dream for a center for community learning and education gardens. Marks and the Marangelos ultimately joined their teams to concept, plan and realize the one-of-a-kind project.

“We are honored and humbled by the immense community outpouring for the creation of the Exploration Center and gardens,” said Jerry Marks, a Missoula County Extension agent and department head. “The dream will soon be a reality because our community came together to create a place where generations of people will learn and experience the wonder of our natural world.”

To learn more about the project, programs and people making it happen, visit JoinTheBuzzMissoula.org.

About Missoula Butterfly House & Insectarium

The Missoula Butterfly House & Insectarium is a 501c3 nonprofit and the only organization in Missoula with the sole educational focus on insects and their arthropod relatives. Its programs offer hands-on, interactive experiences with live arthropods that build curiosity for and awareness of the invaluable role these species play in the health of our ecosystems and in our own lives. At the Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center and Rocky Mountain Gardens, the nonprofit will be home to a year-round tropical butterfly house filled with free-flying butterflies from around the world and a variety of insect exhibits. missoulabutterflyhouse.org

About Healthy Acres Healthy Communities Foundation

The Healthy Acres Healthy Communities Foundation is a 501c3 organization dedicated to creating an engaged community that cultivates vibrant, thriving urban and rural lands for future generations by providing philanthropic support to the programs of Missoula County Weed District & Extension. The Weed District & Extension along with the HAHC Foundation will be the stewards of the Rocky Mountain Gardens and will offer their expansive services and programs throughout the facility. healthyacres.org

###